Town of Amherst Massachusetts
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT

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Press Release
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"Amherst Launches Largest and Fastest Open Municipal WiFi Network in Massachusetts"

On Wednesday, January 2, 2013 the Town of Amherst announced the completion of the largest and fastest open municipal WiFi network in Massachusetts. Amherst is a college town with a downtown area that spans about a mile long. Using in-house custom made access points, the Town has been able deliver robust contiguous WiFi coverage to the entire downtown region.

"In this day and age downtown WiFi is really a must. It's a tool for businesses, a great service for residents and without question it brings more people to the downtown Amherst area," says Town Manager John Musante.

"More and more people are choosing hotels, airlines or shopping venues that offer free WiFi and now we can now proudly say come to downtown Amherst, we have robust WiFi everywhere!" Musante said. In addition to attracting more people to downtown Amherst, more businesses are beginning to shave operating costs by using the downtown WiFi to operate their business and residents in downtown Amherst can choose to use the downtown WiFi from within many homes and apartments.

Access Point Provides Coverage for South Side of Ann Whalen Apartments.

Glazed Donut Shop located on North Pleasant Street next to the Carriage Shops utilizes wireless merchant services.

People find the free signal and begin using it very quickly. Even though the new system hasn't really been publicized there are hundreds of people using it at any given moment and over 11,000 different people have already used the new system at least once. Kristopher Pacunas, Information Technology Director, says "I received a call from someone who lives in a house on Spring Street only minutes after we had to reboot that portion of the system for maintenance, and the new network hadn't even been announced yet. As word spreads about what we've built, we expect as many as two thousand daily users of the system."

Business owner Keren Rhodes owner of Glazed Donut Shop says "The Town's new WiFi network allows us to complete transactions wirelessly and it encourages our customers to stay longer, it's a great service for our business."

Resident Mary Ellen, who lives in the Clark House apartments, describes her use of the system. "I use the new Town WiFi as my only means of internet access and I'm delighted with how fast it is."

The network built using in-house custom designed access points, is optimized to provide superior connectivity with handheld devices and tablets, something many WiFi networks struggle to deliver. In total over 30 access points are deployed on buildings and on street lights.
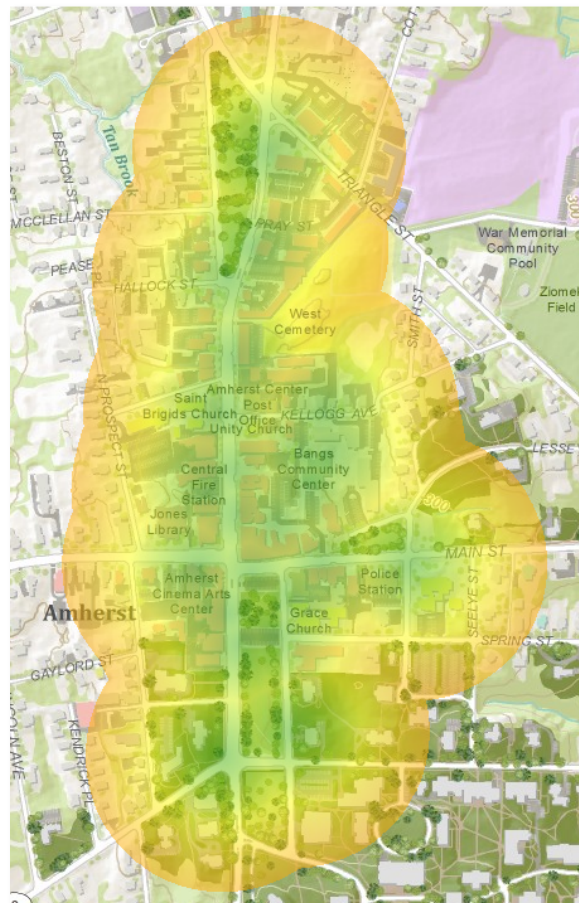
Many cities and towns have talked about or attempted to build large-scale reliable WiFi networks and fallen short as this can be highly complex to achieve. The IT Department with a lot of help from the Public Works Electrical Department took significant care in selecting good mounting locations and trying to make the access points blend into their surroundings.

"The initial goal was to replace aging legacy access points in the downtown area with ones that would reach farther and provide faster speeds for residents, business and visitors in downtown Amherst. I'm very excited to say we have exceeded even our own expectations and we are no doubt now one of the foremost leaders in municipal Public WiFi," says Kristopher Pacunas, Information Technology Director.

Laptops/Desktops	Smartphones/Tablets
Up to 50Mbps*	Up to 25Mbps*
Up to 20Mbps*	Up to 10Mbps*
Up to 5Mbps*	-

* Map and coverage is depicting outdoor speeds. WiFi does not like walls and coverage within private buildings will vary greatly. All public Town owned buildings have complete WiFi coverage. Precise WiFi coverage and Internet bandwidth speed is not guaranteed. Coverage map shows theoretical coverage.

The SSID name for the new network is "Town of Amherst Public". More information about the downtown WiFi is available at http://amherstma.gov/wifi.

COVERAGE AREAS

Questions about the downtown WiFi or this press release may be answered by:
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